

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMEMBASSY LONDON

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AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN

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GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, UR, US, XF

SUBJECT: PRAVDA COMMENT ON ME

REF: MOSCOW 18008

1. SUMMARY: FIRST SOVIET PRESS COMMENTARY ON MIDDLE EAST SINCE THE SECRETARY'S MEETING WITH GROMYKO PERESADA IN PRAVDA, FEBRUARY 26, EXPECTEDLY STRESSES THE IMPORTANCE OF RESUMING GENEVA. COMMENT IN THE MAIN REPLAYS PRINCIPAL THEMES OF BREZHNEV'S FEBRUARY 14 REMARKS BUT IT MUTES HIS RANCOR ABOUT EFFORTS TO LULL THE ARABS WITH SOPORIFICS AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TAKES MORE RELAXED VIEW ABOUT URGENCY OF GETTING THE MEPC

REOPENED. PERESADA CRITICIZES PARTIAL AGREEMENTS BUT, LIKE BREZHNEV, LEAVES SOVIET OPTIONS OPEN ON FURTHER ARAB-ISRAELI AGREEMENTS. HE CRITICIZES ISRAEL FOR REFUSING TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE PALESTINIANS NATIONAL INTERESTS. AND IN THE GENEVA CONTEXT HE APPEARS TO MOVE THE SOVIETS SLIGHTLY FURTHER IN ACCEPTING ARAFAT AND CO. BY CALLING THE PLO THE (OR A) "LEGITIMATE REPRESENTATIVE" OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE. END SUMMARY.

2. PERESADA ASSERTS THAT RECENT WESTERN PRESS SKEPTICISM (HE CITES WASHINGTON STAR-NEWS) ABOUT SUBSTITUTION OF PARTIAL SEPARATE AGREEMENTS FOR AN ALL-ENCOMPASSING MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT HAS BEEN ACCOMPANIED BY EVER MORE PERSISTENT SUPPORT FOR THE ALTERNATIVE OF RETURNING TO GENEVA. NOTING THAT THE MEPC IN ITS TIME STIMULATED EFFORTS TOWARD A SETTLEMENT, PERESADA SAYS THESE WESTERN VIEWS SHOW THAT THERE ARE FORCES EVEN IN THE U.S. WHO UNDERSTAND WHERE THE "REAL CHANCES" TO OVERCOME THE ME CRISIS LIE. NONETHELESS, DESPITE THIS BUILDUP, PERESADA TAKES AN UNUSUALLY LACONIC VIEW ABOUT TIMING FOR RECONVENING THE CONFERENCE. IT IS NATURAL, HE SAYS, THAT "IN THE FUTURE IT CAN BECOME THE MOST APPROPRIATE FORUM TO DISCUSS THE KEY PROBLEMS OF PEACE IN THE ME." HE CONCLUDES THAT THE NEED FOR ME PEACE DEMANDS THE "QUICKEST (SKOREYSHIY) RESUMPTION" OF THE MEPC'S WORK.

3. ON POSSIBLE FUTURE AGREEMENTS BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE ARABS PERESADA MAKES STANDARD CHARGE THAT TEL AVIV WITH SUPPORT FROM "IMPERIALIST CIRCLES" HAS HINDERED RESUMPTION OF GENEVA AND CONTINUES TO SET ITS HOPES ON "PARTIAL STEPS" WHICH EXPERIENCE HAS SHOWN ONLY PROLONG THE CRISIS AND LEAD IT INTO A DEAD END. NONETHELESS, PERESADA RESERVES DIRECT CRITICISM ONLY FOR THOSE "PARTIAL AGREEMENTS WHICH ARE NOT LINKED TO THE QUESTOON OF A GENERAL SETTLEMENT," THEREBY CAREFULLY AVOIDING ANY GENERAL CONDEMNATION OF PARTIAL AGREEMENTS PER SE.

4. ON THE QUESTION OF PLO PARTICIPATION AT GENEVA, PERESADA TAKES TOUGH LINE AND APPEARS TO ADVANCE SOVIET PUBLIC RECOGNITION OF THE PLO AS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PALESTINIANS. HE SAYS PLO AND THE ARAB STATES INVOLVED IN THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ME CONFLICT HAVE STATED THEIR READINESS TO SEND DELEGATIONS TO GENEVA. HOWEVER, ISRAEL, HE SAYS, REFUSES TO RECOGNIZE THE "NATIONAL INTERESTS" OF THE PALESTINIANS OR THE RIGHT OF THEIR "LEGITIMATE REPRESENTATIVE, THE PLO" TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CONFERENCE.

5. COMMENT: TO THE BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE PERESADA'S COMMENT CONTAINS THE FIRST DIRECT PUBLIC SOVIET

CHARACTERIZATION OF THE PLO AS "LEGITIMATE REPRESENTATIVE"
OF THE PALESTINIANS. PREVIOUS SOVIET FORMULAS HAVE FUZZED
THIS QUESTION BY INDIRECTLY EXPRESSING THE SOVIETS' HIGH OPINION
OF THE ARABS' DECISION AT RABAT ON THE PLO--E.G., DURING
ARAFAT'S VISIT HERE IN NOVEMBER (REFTEL). PERESADA'S COMMENT
STILL DOES NOT GO AS FAR AS RABAT, CAREFULLY AVOIDING RECOGNITION
OF THE PLO AS THE "SOLE LEGITIMATE REPRESENTATIVE" OF THE
PALESTINIANS. IT ALSO CAPITALIZES ON THE ABSENCE IN RUSSIAN
OF DEFINITE ARTICLES TO KEEP OPEN THE QUESTION OF WHETHER THE
PLO IS TAKEN AS ONLY "A" REPRESENTATIVE OR "THE" REPRESENTATIVE.
NONETHELESS, PERESADA'S COMMENT APPEARS TO TAKE THE SOVIETS
STILL ONE MORE STEP TOWARD ACCEPTANCE OF THE PLO UNDER
THE RABAT FORMULA.
STOESSEL

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